

Flint Hill North Pole Refinery Preliminary Assessment FAQs

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- **What is a Preliminary Assessment and why did EPA conduct one at this site?**

A Preliminary Assessment is the first step in Superfund process and is designed to identify sites that pose little or no threat to human health and the environment or if it does pose a threat, whether the threat requires further investigation and response under the Superfund program. Existing reports and documentation are collected and reviewed to determine whether a site threatens human health or the environment. The Preliminary Assessment helps to identify hazardous substances at the site, and the populations and sensitive environments likely to be affected by their release.

Any person may petition EPA to perform a Preliminary Assessment of a release when such person is, or may be, affected by a release of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. The Alaska Community Action on Toxics petitioned EPA to conduct a Preliminary Assessment at the Flint Hills North Pole Refinery site.

- **What are the PA findings? Did EPA's assessment uncover anything new?**

At this time EPA is still evaluating the information contained within the Preliminary Assessment report. Because the Preliminary Assessment is the collection and review of existing reports and documentation, no new information was uncovered.

- **What are the next steps after the Preliminary Assessment? Will the site become a superfund site?**

The next step is for EPA to evaluate the information gathered and summarized within the Preliminary Assessment report, then determine if the site threatens human health and the environment and needs additional response under the Superfund program.

If it is determined that the site warrants additional response under the Superfund program, one of the options for addressing the site is proposal of the site to the National Priorities List, which is EPA's list of sites identified for investigation and remediation. Designation of a Superfund site is not automatic and there are other options for investigating and remediating sites. EPA will determine the best method for addressing the site.

- **Does this have any impact on the current investigation being done by DEC?**

The Preliminary Assessment will not have any impact on the current investigation being done by DEC.

- **How does EPA determine what makes a Superfund Site?**

For a site to be eligible for placement onto the Superfund National Priorities list, it must have a Hazard Ranking System score of at least 28.5. Taking information from the Preliminary

Assessment, EPA uses the Hazard Ranking System to rank sites according to their potential risks to human health and the environment. It is intended as a screening mechanism for determining which sites may need an additional comprehensive study. It does not determine if cleanup is possible or worthwhile, or the amount of cleanup needed. It gives EPA a measure of likelihood that people or the environment will be harmed by hazardous substances either on site or leaving the site via air, soil, groundwater, or surface water.

- Can EPA pay for cleanup or do studies to better understand the risks to human health from the contaminant sulfolane, which has been found at the site?

Under the Superfund program, EPA cannot fund non-emergency cleanups or conduct risk assessments unless a site is placed on the National Priorities List.

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